

## STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK

The USDA Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years (FY) 2005-2007, Civil Rights policies, USDA Human Capital Plan for FY 2003-2007, the President's Management Agenda, USDA Annual Performance Plan, and the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, provided the framework for the creation of the ASCR Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2005-2010.

On March 7, 2003, USDA established the position of Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights. The establishment of this position was the result of a transfer of functions from Departmental Administration to the Office of Civil Rights, and was consistent with the recommendations made to the Secretary in September 2002, by the Working Group on Establishing the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights. The Working Group sought input from USDA mission areas and agency management officials and recommended that actions be taken to clearly define roles and responsibilities and eliminate overlap between the Office of Human Resources Management and the Office of Civil Rights.

The first incumbent of the position of Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights was appointed on April 1, 2003, and the functions within the USDA Office of Civil Rights, as well as the Office of Outreach, the Diversity Advisory Council support function, the 1890 Task Force support function, and conflict resolution activities, were assigned to the new Assistant Secretary. These transfers created a proactive civil rights agenda placing a greater emphasis on prevention of civil rights complaints. A recent reorganization within the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights resulted in greater integration of all civil rights components.

As a result of the transfer of functions to the Office of Civil Rights, and to ensure an effective means of carrying out the *USDA Strategic Plan for FY 2002-2007*, we made revisions to the mission, vision, and values of the Office of Civil Rights.

When we began the design of the Strategic Plan, we had two initial objectives. We wanted the plan to broadly encompass the full range of our mission and responsibilities, and we wanted to focus on performance and results. We believe that the plan fulfills both objectives. Over several months, we held a series of meetings to talk about our strategic direction. Together program executives and managers as well as stakeholders worked to meld our strategic direction into actionable goals and objectives, with clear program performance expectations, measurements and the evaluation of results. These programmatic changes resulted in a more integrated and enterprise type approach to the development of strategic goals.

As a result of these actions, a new enterprise Strategic Goal and supporting objectives were devised to proactively meet the USDA Strategic Goals and Management Initiatives, specifically, to "Improve Human Capital Management." Key indicators that contribute to the attainment of the strategic goal and objectives, as well as strategies and timelines, have been identified. With some objectives, baseline information is being created as a result of the integrated goals and supporting objectives by which progress and performance can be tracked and measured.

In keeping with the Department's strategic framework, the Strategic Plan focuses on programmatic goals and objectives, with a separate management plan detailing specific strategies for the improvement of Human Capital Management.

The Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) has one unified strategic goal that supports the Department's strategic goals, objectives and management initiatives: To ensure USDA provides fair and equitable services and benefits to all customers and upholds the civil rights of its employees.

As a result of a recent reorganization, ASCR is comprised of: USDA/1890 Program; USDA/1994 Program; Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center (CPRC); Office of Outreach and Diversity; and Office of Civil Rights. In devising the strategic objectives to meet the ASCR Strategic Goal, as well as the Department's strategic direction and management initiatives; specifically, improving human capital management, a decision was made to use a unified approach to strategic planning.

This approach reflects the Secretary's priorities of: collaboration, coordination and communication among USDA agencies and offices on its strategic direction; ensuring ASCR is results oriented; holding managers accountable for results; linkage to the annual performance plan, human capital plan, and senior executive performance agreements. Further, the approach informs workforce-planning decisions by ensuring the needed skills to achieve performance targets. Through this enterprise approach, program executives worked together in devising a unified strategic goal with supporting strategic objectives, and ensured indicators and performance measures were linked. ASCR's strategic objectives and indicators will be accomplished not only through the efforts of its major program offices, but also with effort from the various USDA agencies and offices that support the programs and carry out the USDA mission. These agencies and offices perform critical functions necessary for full implementation of the goal.

All of the objectives link to the Department's strategic goals and management initiatives, with emphasis on the improvement of human capital, and are designed to demonstrate in concrete ways ASCR's impact on creating a fair and inclusive workplace. The strategic objectives are results oriented and are expressed primarily in quantitative terms or can be assessed through program evaluation. For some objectives, we have devised new ways of measuring our success and have established baseline data to assess our current efforts in these areas.

In other areas, baseline data will be developed following the completion of new program initiatives. While the planning period for these strategic objectives stretches to 2010, certain strategies can be implemented or deleted prior to 2010 with the understanding that the Plan is a fluid and flexible document capable of adapting to changes in program direction and the needs of the Department.

The ASCR Strategic Plan consists of an enterprise approach to pursuing our mission with program specific objectives, indicators and measures in support of the strategic goal. The ASCR mission is to ensure all agencies and programs of the USDA are in compliance with civil rights and related laws, coordinating the administration of civil rights laws and regulations for employees and participants of USDA programs.

These objectives build upon our past accomplishments and broaden our reach across the Department. They are both bold and aggressive to keep pace with the social, economic and demographic trends shaping the Department, with proactive performance measures that help gauge our success in achieving our stated indicators. Our Plan helps to meet USDA's mission goals by ensuring USDA's services and benefits to its customers are provided fairly and equitably, and that the civil rights of its employees are upheld.